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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [OSCE](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REQUEST ON GEORGIA/SOUTH OSSETIA: MAKING
PROGRESS IN THE JCC

Classified By: EUR Deputy Assistant Secretary Matt Bryza.
Reason: 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Department requests that post demarche the GoG at the highest appropriate level drawing on the points in para 3 below to gain Georgian support for substantive discussions in formal meetings of the Joint Control Commission (JCC) as soon as dates can be agreed, even while Georgia and its Euro-Atlantic allies continue to implement and devise strategies for transforming the situation on the ground in South Ossetia and achieving a peaceful resolution of the South Ossetia conflict.

12. (C) BACKGROUND: With a continued fragile security situation in South Ossetia, a planned informal February 28-March 2 meeting of the JCC (Georgia, Russia, South Ossetia, North Ossetia) has fallen apart, possibly over disagreements on the purpose and nature of the meeting. Moreover, the most recent meetings of the JCC have been unproductive, in part because Georgia has reportedly been unprepared to discuss issues other than modifying the format for negotiations. While the Department sympathizes with the GoG's wish to replace the JCC, an inefficient mechanism unfairly biased toward South Ossetia, we are concerned that the Georgians risk further stagnation of a negotiation process (and trying the patience of the Euro-Atlantic community) by persisting in their rejection of the existing negotiating format. We are also concerned that reluctance to use the JCC hinders progress on implementing the 2005 South Ossetia peace plan, some elements of which envisioned working within the JCC. Blockage of the JCC process could also potentially impede implementation of the OSCE's reconstruction projects, in which the U.S. and our Euro-Atlantic partners have invested resources, and which are beginning to make a difference on the ground and build a basis for U.S. and European involvement.

13. (C) TALKING POINTS (REL/GEORGIA):

-- The USG supports Georgia in its aim to broaden the negotiating format for the resolution of the South Ossetia conflict; however, we believe there is use in future JCC meetings, even if they do not focus on how to change the JCC format.

-- The USG recommends strongly that the GoG return to the JCC table as quickly as agreement can be reached on dates and timing. We believe the GOG should use that mechanism, to the extent possible, to effect a transformation on the ground. We recognize that the JCC format is structurally biased in favor of South Ossetia, but the GoG should work within the JCC to propose constructive ideas for resolving the conflict peacefully.

-- Georgia's allies in Europe will welcome Georgia's

continuing use of "existing formats" while we all actively seek ways to expand these or set up new formats, thereby helping U.S. efforts to boost support for Georgia in international fora.

-- For example, we note that the JPKF Commander has referred a request for a checkpoint at Didi Gupta to the next JCC meeting. An OSCE checkpoint at Didi Gupta is one of the measures we and our European partners are pressing for strongly through the OSCE and in our bilateral contacts, and which we believe can change the dynamic on the ground in a positive way. If Georgia deals with this proposal within the JCC, you will either get agreement on a vital strategic checkpoint that can stop diversion of weapons and contraband or expose Russian/Ossetian obstructionism and give the Euro-Atlantic community an opportunity to press for better Russian cooperation in broader multilateral fora.

-- The Euro-Atlantic community will pay attention if your cooperation in the JCC highlights Russian obstructionism. If you do not work within the JCC, Georgia risks being seen by that same group as the obstructionist.

-- Trying to use the JCC to your best advantage will not compromise Georgia's efforts to achieve a transformation on the ground in South Ossetia by other means, for example, through OSCE economic rehabilitation projects. We hope Georgia will continue support for OSCE-sponsored assistance projects that build bridges between Georgians and Ossetians in South Ossetia and, by extension, between South Ossetians and the outside world.

-- These projects are also already offering the desired opportunity for greater U.S. and European involvement in resolving the conflict. We do not want to see any setbacks.

-- We have noted that GoG agreed on a USD 3.5 million construction and rehabilitation program for Georgian-controlled villages in the zone of conflict. Georgian action to improve the lives of its citizens is commendable. We believe those funds should benefit all Georgian citizens in the Tskhinvali Region, both ethnic Georgians and ethnic Ossetians.

-- Redirecting those construction and rehabilitation funds to OSCE-sponsored projects that benefit all of Georgia's citizens in South Ossetia would send a powerful statement not only to the international community, but also to the residents of South Ossetia themselves, about Georgia's intentions to create a safe, multi-ethnic, unified state under an umbrella of Euro-Atlantic values.

-- You can best work with our efforts by using fully every available avenue for progress, including the JCC as long as it is the only place the South Ossetians and Russia will cooperate.

-- Finally, we have reviewed your draft memorandum on further activities aimed at resolving the South Ossetia conflict. We find many elements of this document positive and consistent with efforts already underway.

-- We believe such a new initiative would have greatest resonance if presented against a backdrop of full cooperation on the part of Georgia within the JCC. Otherwise, it could be met with skepticism that there will be any chance of dialogue or agreement on it with the South Ossetian side, and thus no viable means to advance it.

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